# The ISLAND of REGENERATION

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SYNOPSIS.

A young woman cast ashore on a lonely island, finds a solitary inhabitant, a young white man, dressed like a savage and unable to speak in any known language. She decides to educate him and mold his mind to her own ideals. She finds evidence that leads her to believe that the man is Joan Revell Charnock of Virginia, and that he was cast ashore as a child. Katharine Brenton was a highly specialized product of a leading university. Her writings on the sex problem attracted wide attention. The son of a multi-millionaire becomes infatuated with her and they decide to put her theories into practice. A few days on his yacht reveals to her that he only professed lofty ideals to possess her. While drunk he attempts to kiss her. She knocks him down and leaves him unconscious and escapes in the darkness in a gasoline launch. During a storm she is cast ashore on an island. Three years' teaching gives the man a splendid education. Their love for each other is revealed when he rescues her from a cave where she had been imprisoned by an earthquake. A ship is sighted and they light a beacon to summon it. Langford on his yacht, sights the beacon and orders his yacht put in. The woman recognizes the yacht and tells her companion that a man on board had injured her in the greatest way. Langford recognizes Katharine. He tells the man that she had been his mistress and narrowly escapes being killed. An American cruiser appears. Officers hear the whole story and Langford asks Katharine to marry him. Katharine declares that she will marry no one but her island companion. The latter says he still loves her but that the revelations have made a change.

CHAPTER XVIII.—Continued.

"Is the present Charnock married?"

"No," returned the chaplain, "he is an old bachelor."

"That will make it easier for our friend here," said Mr. Whittaker, "provided the evidence is thought convincing."

"The best evidence that he could present," returned the chaplain, "is in his face. He is the living image of his father as I knew him, and he has family characteristics which I think would enable almost anyone to identify him without question."

"Sir," said the islander, addressing the chaplain, "did you know my mother?"

"That I did," returned the old man. "Her name was Mary Page Thornton, and she was one of the sweetest girls in Virginia."

"And will you tell me about her, and about my father and my people?"

"With the greatest pleasure," said the chaplain, kindly. "Meanwhile Capt. Ashby and these gentlemen will wish to hear your story."

"Take him to your cabin," said the captain promptly, "and tell him the things he wants to know. We can wait."

"No," returned the islander; "I can wait. I have waited all these years and a few hours more or less will make little difference. You have a right to know my story, and here it is."

Rapidly, concisely, with a fine dramatic touch, he told the story as he knew it of his life on the island. He was so entirely unconventional that he interwove the bare details of the strange relation which he gave them with personal touches. He made no secret of his love and worship for the girl, of the belief in her which he had cherished, of the reverence in which he had held her. He exhibited that strange commixture of feeling with which he regarded her as a human woman and as a demi-goddess. He revealed that he was at once her master and her creature, yet through it all there ran such a thread of bitterness, of grief, of resentment, of shame, that his auditors, at first unpossessed of the key to his feelings, listened to him with amazement and could scarcely realize or comprehend. He told the story of the two lives up to the sighting of the ship upon the island, and then, his heart failing him, he turned to Whittaker and bade him take up the relation.

It was a delicate matter of which to speak, but the simplicity with which the first part of the tale had been presented gave the officer his cue. He was a man of retentive memory, of quick apprehensive power, and with a nice sense of discrimination, a rare man, indeed. And he told the rest of the tale with a subtle sympathy for the situation and the actors that enabled him so to present it to the interested little group of officers that he almost made them see it as it transpired.

"And what," asked the captain, when the final word had been said, "do you propose to do now, Mr. Charnock?"

It was the first time that he had been so addressed and the man started. He had heard Mr. Whittaker's words as one in a dream. He had been going over that dreadful scene on the sands. His heart was lacerated and torn again. He was blind to everything but the past. He saw her face dimly in the present. He could see nothing of happiness in the future.

"I don't know," he answered.

"But surely this has not made any difference in your feelings?"

"I can't tell. The difference is in her, not in me."

"She made a frightful mistake," said the captain impressively, "but she has nobly atoned, and—"

"She's not what I thought she was," said the man, "and if I love her, I love her now not because, but in spite, of what she is, and there is a difference."

"Miss Brenton," interposed Whittaker at this juncture, "has settled the matter herself. She says that she will have no man's pity, no man's contempt, that no man shall marry her on sufferance, and that—"

"Right," said the surgeon, who was a man of very few words and generally good ones.

"My young friend," broke in the chaplain, "if I might advise—"

"But this," returned the islander, with fierceness, "is not a matter for advice. I don't know the world or its customs. I must appear strange to you men. But I take it that a man's choice of a wife, a man's settlement of his future is not a thing that he brooks counsel over. At any rate, I want none of it."

"Come with me," said the chaplain; "we will talk it over. I have lived in the world," he went on, gently. "Perhaps I can help you. Have we your permission to withdraw, Capt. Ashby?"

"Certainly," said the captain.

"Pardon me a moment, chaplain," interposed Whittaker; "but the young lady has asked that some of us go ashore to take her deposition as to the matters that have been alleged concerning our friend here. Capt. Ashby, will you?"

"Certainly, Mr. Whittaker, I will go. And if you will accompany me, doctor, and you, chaplain, I shall be glad. Mr. Whittaker, you are a notary public and can administer the necessary oaths."

"Very good, sir," returned Mr. Whittaker. The other gentlemen bowed their acquiescence. "The lady said she would like to be undisturbed until evening."

"At two bells in the second dog watch then have the cutter called away," returned the captain.

"Beg pardon, captain," said the surgeon, "but do you or any of you know this lady to be Miss Brenton?"

"No," said the captain, "I don't know her. Do you, Mr. Whittaker, or you, chaplain?"

"Well, then," said the surgeon, as both the officers shook their heads, "it will be necessary to have some one ashore who does know her in order to swear to her identity to make her deposition worth anything."

"There is Langford," said Whittaker, "he knows her."

"Very good," said the captain; "send a boat over to the yacht and present my compliments to Mr. Langford. Ask him if he will meet us ashore at quarter after five o'clock. Say to him also that I should be glad to have him dine with me to-night at seven. Chaplin, will you and Mr. Charnock take luncheon with me later?"

Now, to go back to the island. The woman stood on the strand proudly, resolutely, sternly erect, without a sign of unbending until the boats reached the sides of the two ships. Even then she kept herself in the bonds of a control of steel. She turned slowly, walked up the beach, entered the grove of palms, mechanically found the path and plodded along it, still erect and unbending, until the windings of the trail and the thickening of the grove hid her from any chance watchers on the ship.

Then, and not until then, did she give way completely. She threw herself down upon the sand in the cool shadow of the great rocks in what to her had suddenly become a weary land, and outstretched her arms as if to clasp the earth to her breast in default of the man she had dreamed of and trusted, she had loved and lived for, and lay there a silent, shuddering, wretched figure.

Her crushing disappointment at his failure to rise to the measure of her ideal of him, the total end of her dream of happiness, the breaking of all her hopes, the closing of all her ambitions, the tearing asunder of her heartstrings whelmed her in agony. She had thought that never could humanity experience more than the pain superinduced by the horror of her position upon the ship, but that pain to the present was like a caress. For to all that old horror was added a new sense of loss, of disappointment and despair. Like Elijah of old, dismayed, disheartened, broken, she prayed that she might die there on the sands.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Man's Failure.

At five o'clock a boat put off from the big white cruiser, conveying the islander, the captain, the other officers and Langford to the shore. The woman met them on the sand. She had discarded her woven tunic and was dressed in the faded blue blouse and skirt which she had worn when she had left the yacht and which she had ever since preserved with such scrupulous care for an emergency like this. Well was it for her that the garments were loose and easy-fitting, else she could not have put them on, so splendidly had she developed in waist and chest and limb. She wore stockings and shoes, and, save for a certain natural elegance and freedom in her bearing, she looked much as any other woman, except that few women were as beautiful as she.

After a momentary hesitation and a glance at the islander, who, after his first swift, comprehending survey of the woman, stood with averted head—she, conscious painfully of his every gesture and movement—the lieutenant commander performed the necessary introductions. This ceremony over, it was the woman who spoke.

"I sent for you, gentlemen," she began, "in order that a necessary deposition might be made to enable, if possible, my"—she paused and bowed formally toward the islander—"this gentleman, to establish his identity, upon which, as I learn from Mr. Whittaker, much seems to depend. I have here—"

"But could you not do this more conveniently later on the ship, Miss Brenton?" interposed the captain. He had been told that she intended to stay on the island, but he could not believe it. "We shall be very glad indeed to offer you passage home. The ship is fitted for a flag and the admiral's quarters are yours to command. We are sailing direct to the United States, with a stop at Honolulu, and will be glad to restore you to your friends."

"Sir," said the woman, "I have no friends who care enough about me to welcome me or whom I care enough about to wish to see. My mind is made up. I shall stay on the island, at least for the present."

"But, my dear young lady," began the officer.

"Capt. Ashby," said the woman, "you are the commander of that ship?"

"I am."

"To you is committed the ordering of her course?"

"To me alone, Miss Brenton."

"You decide all questions connected with her on your own responsibility?"

"I do, certainly; but—"

"Sir, this is my ship, this island. If I choose to stay here, I cannot think you will endeavor to take me hence by force."

"By no means."

"Nor have I any more fondness for having my decisions discussed than you would have for hearing your orders argued or questioned."

"It is my island," cried the man, roughly, "and if you stay, I stay."

"We lose time," said the woman, shortly. "I am here to give my testimony; you are prepared to take it?"

"I am," said the lieutenant-commander, stepping forward, notebook in hand.

"Captain, will you conduct the necessary inquiry?"

"Certainly," said the captain. "Mr. Langford, do you identify this lady?"

"I do, sir," answered Langford. "She is Miss Katherine Brenton of San Francisco."

"You say this of your own personal knowledge?"

"Yes, sir."

"You will make affidavit to that fact?"

"With pleasure."

"I wondered," said the woman, bitterly, "why you came back."

"It was at my wish, madam," returned Capt Ashby, formally.

He was not greatly prepossessed with the imperative manner and demeanor of this young woman, but he did not see exactly how he could resent it, or force any improvement in it. "Will you proceed now with your story," he continued. "Will you speak slowly so that Mr. Whittaker, who does not write shorthand, can take it down?"

Thereupon the woman told that portion of her tale which related to the evidence which she exhibited, the piece of the boat with the name of the ship upon it, the dog collar, the silver box, the Bible, the two rings. These were marked, set down and sworn to. The affidavit to which she subscribed her name, and to which she took oath on the very Bible of the island, was brief, though comprehensive, and the little ceremony was soon over. Mr. Whittaker assumed charge of all the exhibits. The tale having been completed and all the little formalities got through with, the little party stood around in awkward silence wondering what was next to come.

"Miss Brenton," said the captain at last, breaking the pause, "it seems a shame. For God's sake, reconsider your decision and come off to the ship!"

"No," returned the woman, quietly; "my mind is made up."

"Katharine!" exclaimed Langford, extending his hand in one final appeal.

"Not with you, either," said the woman.

"My dear young lady," began the old chaplain, "think what it is you do. Has any human being with such powers as you possess a right to bury herself in this lonely island? Is there no call—?"

"Sir," the woman interposed, "your plea might move me if anything could, but indeed 'tis useless as the rest."

"Hear mine, then," said the man, abruptly, even harshly.

The woman turned and faced him as unrelenting and as determined as she had faced the others. What could he say? There was but one plea that could move her. Was he about to make that?

"We have loved each other," he went on, brokenly. "It was my dearest wish, my most settled determination, to make you my wife. That wish I still entertain, that determination has not departed from me. You have refused to marry that man—"

"And would you have me do so?" asked the woman.

"No, a thousand times, no. I am sorrier every moment that I look at him that I did not kill him. But having refused him, there is nothing now that you can do but marry me. And as you have refused him, it makes it the more incumbent upon me to marry you and to take you away. Your honor demands it."

"My honor!" flamed out the woman, indignantly.

"I have said it," returned the man, doggedly.

"Gentlemen, you will forgive our frankness," said the woman, turning to the little group who waited, all except Langford, who had walked away out of earshot and who resolutely kept his back toward the party, "but this thing has to be settled. Now," said the woman, "here is no question of honor, but of love. I ask you, Man, do you love me as you did last night?"

"I—" he began, falteringly.

"You have never told me a lie," she continued. "You have never known anything but the truth."

"Until I learned from you," cried the man, "what you had concealed."

The woman smiled bitterly, waving aside this cruel stab.

"Tell me the truth. Do you love me as you did last night?"

"If you will have it, no," said the man, rushing to his doom.

Men have taken a bullet in the breast, a shot in the heart, and for a moment have maintained their erect position. The woman knew in that moment how such things could be.

"But I love you still," said the man. "And I still want you for my wife."

"Last night," went on the woman, as if in a dream, "I seemed to you the embodiment of every excellence that humanity can possess short of the divine."

"Yes," said the man, "I loved you as—"

"Do I still possess those qualities in your eyes?"

He hesitated. He strove to speak.

"The truth! The truth!" whispered the woman. "Nothing else, so help you God!"

"No," said the man, "but I love you still, and you ought to marry me, you must. Can't you understand?"

"Listen," said the woman, fiercely, "I did not go to that man yonder, although he offered me everything that honor could dictate and that true affection could suggest, I do believe, because I did not love him, although I have since come to respect him, after I have thought it over. It is not duty, but love, which is the compelling motive in this matter. And I won't take you; I would not take an angel from heaven unless he thought me in every particular all that a woman should be to a man, unless he loved me with his whole heart and soul absolutely, unfeignedly, completely. You don't. I don't even think that I love you now. You have been tried and tested, and you have failed. Gentlemen, will you take him away?"

"I stay here," said the man, bluntly, drawing apart from the others, "and I will kill with my own hands the man who lays a finger upon me."

"Sir," said the captain, "this land, I take it, is the United States. As the ranking officer present, I represent its law. It is under my rule. As to your choice, I have nothing to say, but as far as regards other things, you will have to obey me here as any other citizen of our country."

"And I know nothing of the United States or its laws," answered the man, proudly. "I am a law unto myself."

"The first lesson that the world will teach you, sir," returned the captain, pointedly, "is that that position cannot be maintained; that the whole fabric of civilization depends upon concession by individuals of natural rights and upon the enforcement of these concessions by other individuals to whom has been delegated that power."

"I don't wish to learn it, and that is why I will not leave this island," persisted the man.

It was the woman who intervened. She stepped close to the man and laid her hand upon his arm.

"You said that in some fashion you loved me," she urged.

"In some fashion I do," he replied.

"It grows late. Captain, can your ship lie by the island until morning?"

"If you wish, certainly," returned the captain.

"Very well. Man, will you then go aboard the ship with these gentlemen and leave me alone here for the night?"

"Alone, madam!" excaimed the captain.

"Certainly, sir," returned the woman. "There is not a harmful thing upon the island. You can come back in the morning and we will discuss then what is best to be done. Really, gentlemen," she went on, with a piteous tremble of her lip, for one moment losing her control, "I have been tried beyond the strength of woman to-day. If I can have a quiet rest, if in the morning—"

"That is reasonable," said the surgeon. "The lady is in no state for this discussion, nor, indeed, are you, sir," he continued, looking hard at the man.

"Very well," said the captain. "Come, Mr. Charnock, you cannot refuse that request; gentlemen. Madam, good night."

He turned away, followed by the others. Charnock for the moment hesitated.

"I give you one more chance," whispered the woman in his ear. "I think myself fit for the wife of any man, do you think so? Do you love me? Do you care for me as you did last night? Can you think of me as all that is sweet and lovely and noble and pure, and worthy of any man's affection?"

She bent closer toward him in the intensity of her feelings. The words rushed from her. The man passed his hand over his forehead.

"I can only say what I said before, that I love you still, that I will marry you, and that you ought to be—"

"That is enough," interrupted the woman. "Good-by."

She drew instantly apart from him.

"Mr. Charnock," rang the captain's voice, imperatively.

Slowly the islander turned and made his way to the sea after the others.

The woman, thus left alone upon the island, was face to face with a crisis which could only be met in two ways. Either she must go away with the man, or they must both remain on the island. It was possible that the captain might be induced to use force to take the man away, but that was not likely, and if it were attempted, she believed, with much foundation for her belief, that the man who had never been coerced by a human being except her would fight until he died. She could not go away with him; she could not live with him on the island. A future opened before him. She had learned that afternoon on the sand that if his identity could be established he would be a man of great wealth, a power, a factor in the world's affairs. She had had her experience in life, her taste of power. It did not matter about her. It mattered greatly about him.

She had given him a final chance. He did not love her as she would be loved. He could not love her. It was evident to her that he never would. She had nothing to live for, nothing to hope for, nothing to dream about. There was one way of cutting the Gordian knot; she could die. And yet, somehow, the instinct of life was strong in her heart.

She crossed the island to her side, where she was hidden from the ship, and went down to the edge of the water. She even slipped off the garments of civilization and stood forth a primitive Eve and waded out a little way into the lagoon. The night had fallen and she was calm in the screen of the darkness. She could easily swim out to the barrier reef, clamber upon it, and then plunge into the blue Pacific and swim on and on, and fight and fight until the last vestige of her strength was gone, and then sink down, leaving him free and settling the question. And yet the waters lapping about her feet held her back, drove her back, retarded her in her advance.

Could she do it? Should she do it? At least she would not give up the idea for want of trying. She resolutely set herself to wade into the deeper sea. That she waded was evidence of her indecision. Under other circumstances, or had she been clear in her mind as to her course, a quick run, a spring, a splash, and she would have been in the midst of the lagoon. She went slowly, and as the water grew deeper, she went more slowly. It was warm and pleasant in the lagoon. The slight difference of temperature between the water and the air ordinarily was only stimulating. And yet the sea had never seemed so cold to her as it was in that hour.

By and by she stopped, the waters now up to her breast. The wind blew gently toward the land, and the waves struck her softly and beat her back. She stopped dead still and thought and thought, wrestling with her problem, full of passionate disappointment, vain regret, despair, conscious that life held nothing for her, and yet clinging to it, unknowing what would be the outcome of the Titanic struggle raging in her breast between primal passions, love of life and love of man!

CHAPTER XX.

The Repentance That Came Too Late.

For the first time in his life the man of the island played the coward. He was afraid to be alone. The others, the officers of the ship, that is, not Langford—he had gone back to his own yacht, declining the captain's invitation to dinner—would have respected the islander's mood and have left him to himself, but it was evident that he craved their society. Whittaker and the old chaplain suspected how it would be with him, but they knew that sooner or later he would have to retire to rest, and sooner or later he would be alone.

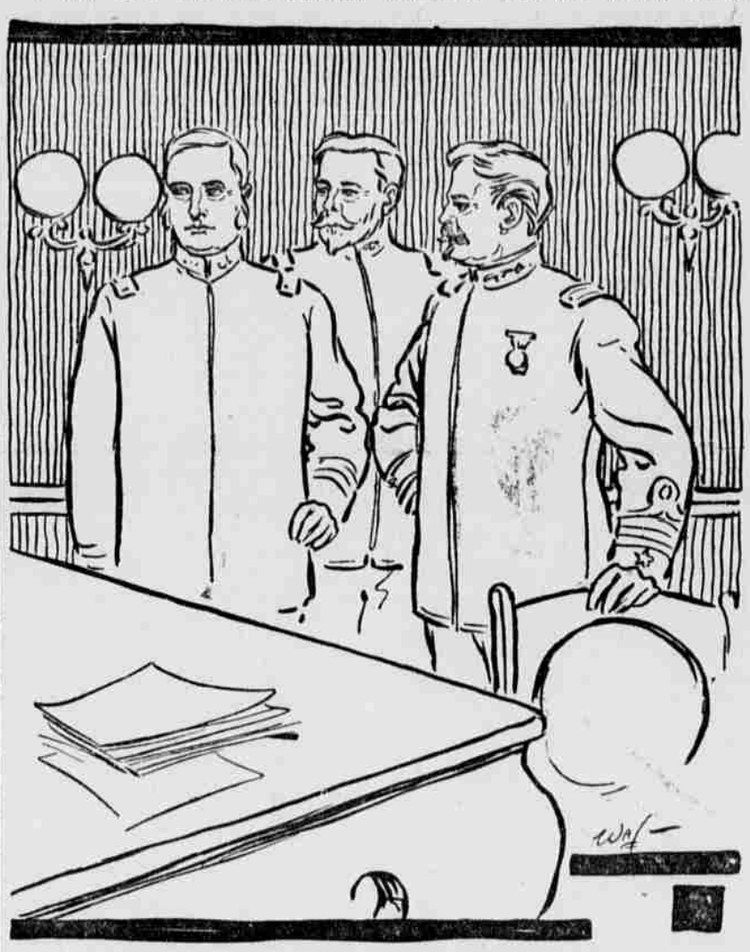
And then his grief was so obvious, that in accordance with a natural and commendable tendency they strove to cheer him up. They encouraged him to ask questions. They told him many things in reply that the woman could not have told him; that he had half dimly suspected, but had not known. They cleared up to him many things which had seemed mysterious and strange to him.

And on their part they marveled at the things he did know, at the thoroughness with which he had been taught, and at the wonderful acuteness of perception which he displayed. The woman had marveled at it, too, but she had become used to it in three years of intimacy. They saw it immediately with greater surprise.

A spare cabin in the wardroom had been arranged for the islander, and there provided with the unwonted luxury of night wear after a hearty "Good-night" from the lieutenant commander and a fervent "God bless you" from the old chaplain, he was left to his own devices. The strangeness of his situation, the soft bed, the snowy linen, the silk pajamas, the confining area of the cabin, the sudden touch with luxuries of civilization would in itself have kept him awake had he been as heart whole and as care free as when the woman had landed upon the island. But, indeed, the strangeness of these things aroused no emotions in his mind at all, for the moment he was alone his thoughts, which he had been fighting desperately to keep upon other things, reverted to her. What was she doing for the first time alone upon that island? What was she thinking? He realized that no more than he could she be sleeping.

Unflinchingly he reviewed with what calmness he could muster the scenes of the morning and the day. He forced himself to consider in all its lights and bearings the information that had been given to him. He tortured himself by the deliberate slow recalling of every detail, and then, quivering as if under the stimulus of some blow upon a raw wound, he reviewed his own conduct. Enlightenment came to him in that dark and silent hour. He discovered first of all that he loved her; that the check and counter-check and variation and alteration in his emotions had been swept away in a great development of a more transcending feeling. If she should ask him that question on the morrow as to whether he loved her as he had on that never-to-be-forgotten night, he would still answer no, because he loved her more.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



"Is the Present Charnock Married?"

Oh, That There Were Others.

They knew that she lived abroad for a couple of years, they said. Why did she never speak of it?

"I used to once in awhile," she answered, "but not any more after I met the two Brooklyn girls who had traveled all over the world. They cured me. It was 'When I was in China,' or 'When I was in Japan,' or 'When I went through the Black forest,' or 'When I took a sail down the Red sea,' until they just about bored me to death. I said to myself then that I would ever after spare my friends, and I have kept my word."